

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY CELEBRATES PASSAGE OF CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-26) today applauded the passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act. Hinchey and 239 of his colleagues voted to pass the bill commonly known as Shays-Meehan or McCain-Feingold early this morning.

"Finally we have a real shot at eliminating soft money from federal elections," said Hinchey. "That's not the end to all our campaign finance problems but it's a great first step. I am particularly pleased that the bill we passed this morning addresses those sham issue ads we see so much of at election time. Once this bill goes into effect, special interest groups will no longer be able to influence an election under the guise of issue advocacy."

"Soft money" refers to unregulated donations made to national parties. Its use in federal campaigns has made it easy for wealthy corporations and individuals to unduly influence elections. As a result, these soft money contributors are sometimes in a position to have special access to the officials they get elected. In addition to banning the solicitation and use of soft money in federal elections, Shays-Meehan eliminates the loophole that special interest groups have exploited to run attack ads against a candidate without identifying who is behind the ad or counting the ad as a donation to a candidate.

Last year the Senate passed campaign finance reform and the House of Representatives, which had passed the bill in previous congresses, was poised to follow suit. However, the Republican leadership of the House managed to block its consideration. Subsequently a majority of House members signed a discharge petition that forced the bill to the floor of the House. Hinchey was an original cosponsor of Shays-Meehan and signed the discharge petition that allowed it to come to come up for a vote.

Throughout the day on Wednesday opponents of campaign finance reform tried to defeat Shays-Meehan by offering amendments that would have made the bill unpalatable to various factions of the bipartisan coalition that supported it. Hinchey voted against all of these "poison pill" amendments.

"The game is to phrase the amendments in such a way that's it's difficult to oppose them," said Hinchey. "The Republicans tried to make it appear that supporters of Shays-Meehan were against everything from veterans to civil rights. I'm proud of my colleagues for sticking together and not giving into these cynical tactics."